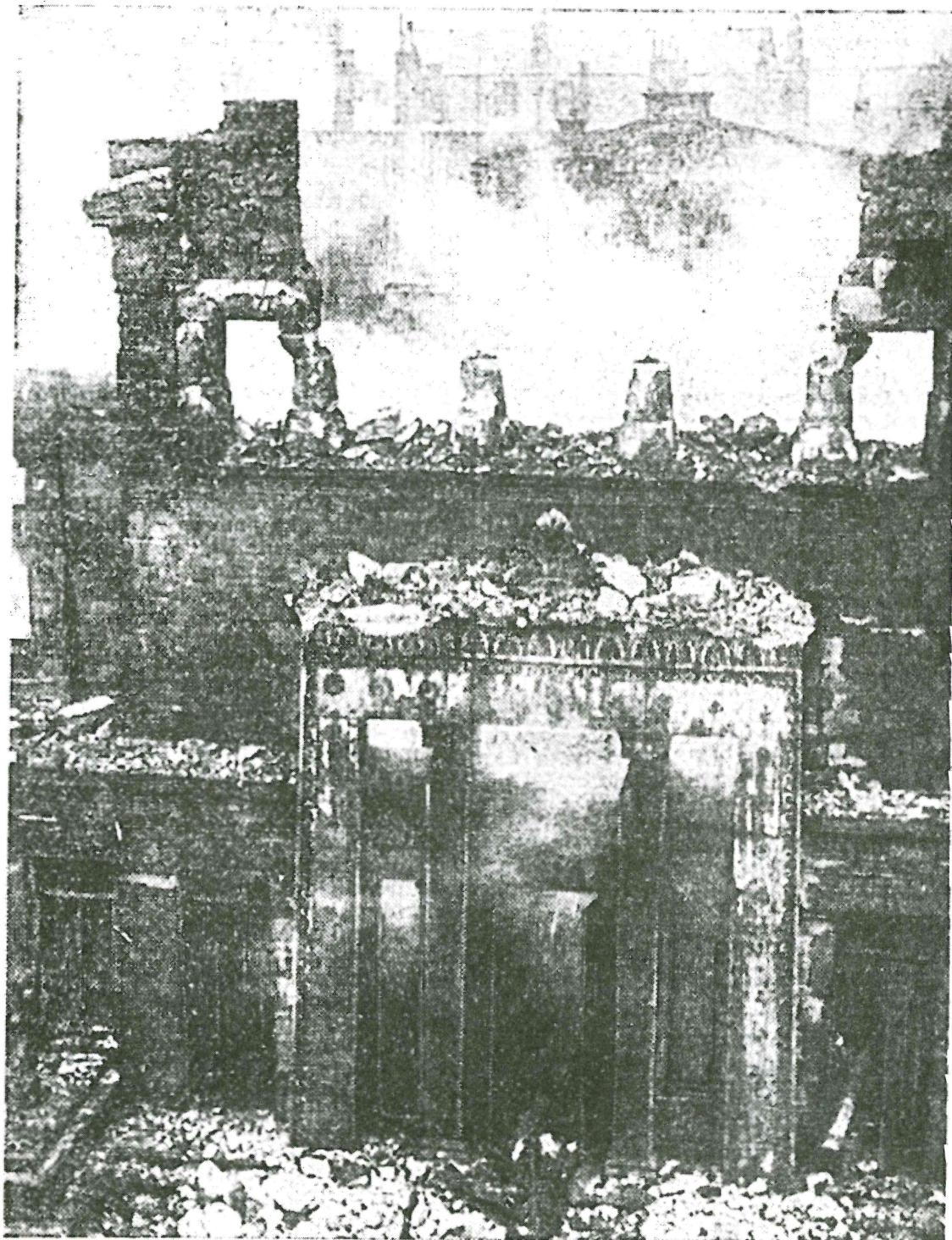


# The Alexander Thomson Society NEWSLETTER

Nº 9 FEBRUARY 1994

## FIRE BOMBS DESTROY CHURCH



This church was destroyed by incendiaries during yesterday morning's raid on a town in Central Scotland.

**Inside: 1994 WINTER LECTURE SERIES**

# CASES

## HOLMWOOD

We are not able to report anything definite at present, but it seems that the long-running negotiations between the City of Glasgow, Strathclyde Regional Council and the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions are going well. We very much hope to be able to report really good news in our next *Newsletter*.

## OAKFIELD AVENUE

What used to be called Eton Terrace in Oakfield Avenue is one of Thomson's finest compositions, full of his characteristic motifs and subtleties. Unfortunately, this terrace of houses is in lamentably and conspicuously poor condition, owing to the usual Glasgow problem of divided and multiple ownership exacerbated here by planning blight created by the University of Glasgow's former plans to redevelop most of Hillhead.

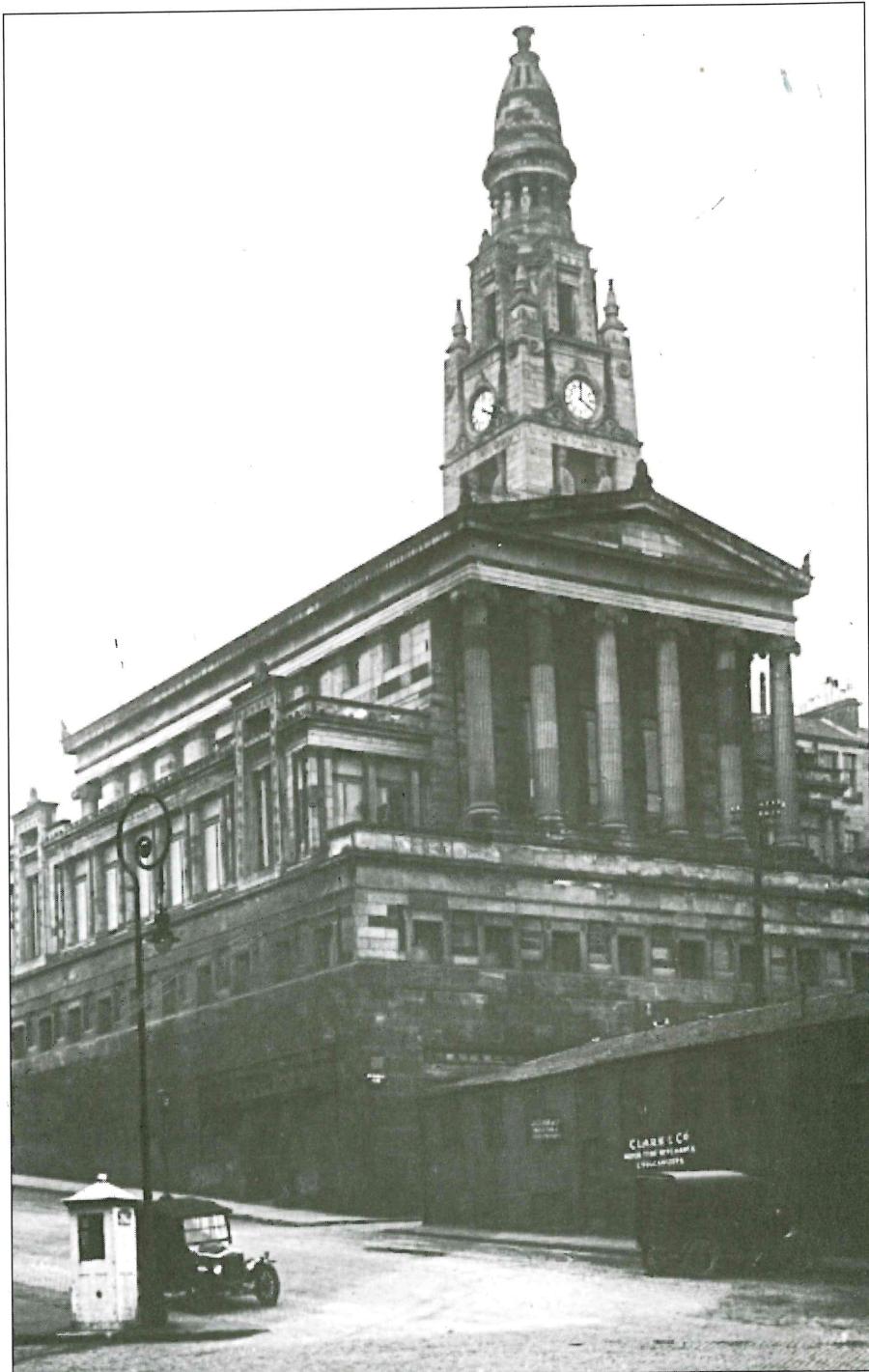
We are therefore very pleased that a proposed initiative by the City of Glasgow and Historic Scotland to undertake urban restorations of the type which have distinguished the New Town of Edinburgh for some years will begin in Glasgow with Thomson's Eton Terrace. It is an excellent choice.

## TOR HOUSE, ROTHESAY

We have made representations to Argyll & Bute District Council about a proposal to build two houses in the grounds of a demolished house on the opposite side of Ardenraig Road, Craigmore. We consider that this represents an excessive development of the site which will adversely affect the setting of a listed building one of Thomson's best surviving villas.

## ST VINCENT STREET CHURCH

While the Council's Estates Department is moving ahead with plans for a full restoration of the St Vincent Street Church—estimated at £4.4 million—a depressing setback emerged in November when we learned that the Free Church congregation which leases the building from the District Council is considering moving elsewhere. It is difficult to dispute the congregation's rea-



St Vincent Street Church. Photo courtesy of the  
RCAHMS (National Monuments Record of Scotland)

sons. Great inconvenience has been caused by the repair work which has been carried out by the building's owners over the last three years (about which we have had occasion to complain) while the Free Church has, so far, been unable to renew its lease on satisfactory and reasonable terms.

This is very bad news, as it may make yet another church redundant in a city alarmingly well-stocked with redundant churches and will, inevitably, place the building at risk (we cannot but remember what hap-

pened to the Caledonia Road Church). We have consistently argued that the best possible use for any historic building is for the purpose for which it was designed, and we have always hoped that the St Vincent Street Church could be used both for worship and for other functions which might allow public access.

However, good may come of this crisis, as the idea has now been floated that all interested parties might be better served if the church was administered by a charitable trust.

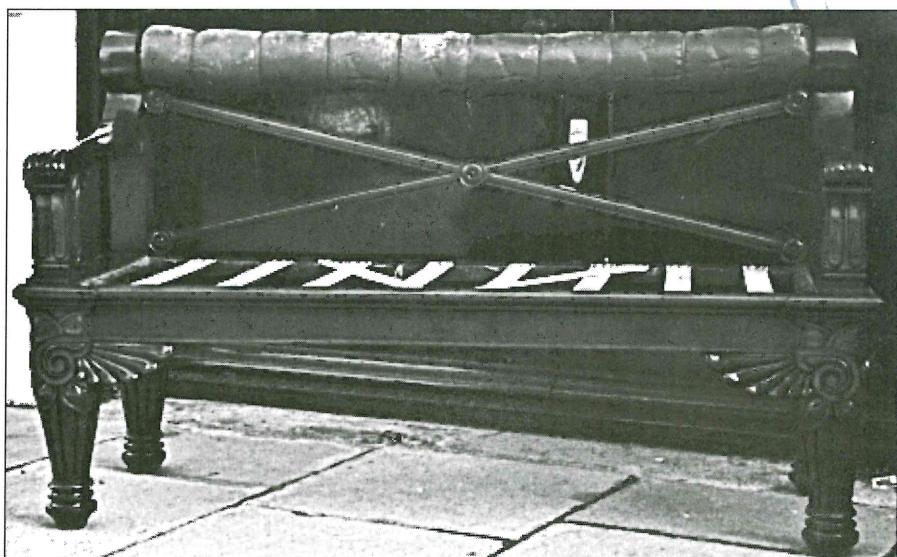
The City of Glasgow would, of course, continue to play a leading role in the building's future and would, we trust, continue to fulfil its financial responsibilities towards the repair of the fabric. The advantage of a charitable trust is that it would be better placed to raise money from both public and private sources than if the building was directly owned and administered by a local authority. Glasgow Council itself could benefit from this 'arm's length' principle of administration.

This idea has emerged from the fortunate circumstance of Campbell McKenzie, a former student of the Mackintosh School of Architecture and a former member of the St Vincent Street Free Church congregation as well an enthusiast for Thomson, now working for Simpson & Brown, architects, in Edinburgh. James Simpson has therefore taken an interest in the church and convened a meeting of all interested parties on 15th December to discuss the possibility of setting up a charitable trust. Although reservations were naturally expressed about the idea, it was agreed to pursue it. It was particularly encouraging that Glasgow's new Director of Planning, Michael Hayes, recommended the idea and pointed out how in Liverpool, St George's Hall—one of what Thomson considered "unquestionably the two finest buildings in the kingdom"—had been leased to a trust by the City Council and that fund-raising and restoration was proceeding satisfactorily.

It is also encouraging that the World Monuments Fund, based in New York, which assisted the restoration of St George's Hall, has taken an interest in the St Vincent Street Church. As we never tire of pointing out, this church is not just one of Glasgow's treasures but a building of international significance which deserves a full, proper and painstaking restoration. It is typical that the Norwegian architect, Ole Wiig, should write to your Chairman as President of the Norske Arkitekters Landsforbund about how excited he was to be shown "the great architecture of Alexander 'Greek' Thomson" but also how, "at the same time I felt rather sad to see the poor state of

*Continued over*

## MORE FURNITURE



MR JAMES GRAHAM STEWART of Messrs Carlton Hobbs (46 Pimlico Road, London SW1U 8LP) has very kindly sent us photographs of a splendid bench. It certainly looks Thomsonian, but Juliet Kinchin's verdict is: "This looks like classic Trotter to me (see Bamford's 'Dictionary of Edinburgh Cabinetmakers' or the hall table in Kelvingrove). I presume there would have been a drop-in seat, possibly upholstered in red leather to match the back roll. Clearly the seat would not have been designed so as to interfere with the splendid back. I don't see any reason to connect this piece with Thomson although it does look Scottish."

Nevertheless, there is Thomson furniture to be discovered, as we know he designed pieces for 'Holmwood', as well as objects for himself like the magnificent 'sideboard' now on display at Kelvingrove. We therefore hope that we may be notified of other possible pieces by Thomson.



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# ACTIVITIES

## WEDNESDAY WINTER LECTURE SERIES

This year's Winter Lecture Series looks at other Neo-classical architects in Scotland whose work Thomson would certainly have known and admired. The lectures will take place in the First Floor Lecture Theatre of the Mackintosh School of Architect-

# CASES

repair of the St Vincent Street Church. It is so important to stop the decay and save the building, not only for Glasgow but also for the architectural history of the world." Quite.

### WALMER CRESCENT

Both we and adjacent residents continue to be seriously concerned about the poor condition of the eastern end of Walmer Crescent above Cessnock subway station. As the council restored the terrace in the past, it is intolerable that its condition and future should be threatened by a recalcitrant and irresponsible owner of one of the tenements. We very much hope that strong action will be taken to ensure that N°s 1-3 Walmer Crescent are repaired.

### N° 4, GREAT WESTERN TERRACE

Work on this magnificent house being undertaken by the architects Page & Park for the developers Classical House (Scotland) Limited is now proceeding. One of the obstacles to a full and proper restoration of the interior is the fact that lamps, door furniture and other fittings were illegally and disgracefully stripped out and sold by the former delinquent owners of the building. This was bought in good faith by private individuals, some of whom have now acted in a public spirited manner and returned the looted objects at cost price. It is sad, therefore, to have to record that one eminent citizen of Glasgow who acquired door furniture has declined even to respond to the polite approaches made by Classical House to try and secure the restoration of these items.

ure, 177 Renfrew Street, on Wednesdays at 7.00 p.m.

### FEBRUARY 2nd

Dr James Macaulay on Archibald Simpson of Aberdeen.

### FEBRUARY 16th

Ian Gow on William Henry Playfair.

### MARCH 2nd

Joe Rock on Thomas Hamilton, who was, of course, the architect of the Scottish example of what Thomson thought "unquestionably the two finest buildings in the kingdom": the Royal High School in Edinburgh (the other was English: St George's Hall in Liverpool).

# BOOKS

Those who missed the brief exhibition about David Hamilton held in Stirling's Library in November may well like to acquire the accompanying book. Entitled 'David Hamilton, Architect 1768-1843: Father of the Profession', and published by Park Circus Promotions (6 Park Circus Place, G3 6AN) with the assistance of Historic Scotland and the Glasgow Institute of Architects.

Edited by Aonghus MacKechnie, it contains essays by David Walker, Linda Fryer, Diane Watters, Ranald MacInnes and Ian Gow. At £3.30, this is a bargain for a first publication about a great Glasgow architect whose work Thomson certainly knew and was influenced by.

1994 will, we trust, see the long-awaited publication by the Edinburgh University Press of a book of essays about Thomson edited by Gavin Stamp and Sam McKinstry. This will have contributions by Mark Baines, Brian Edwards, Andor Gomme, Ian Gow, Juliet Kinchin, James Macaulay, Charles McKean, John McKean, Andy MacMillan, Jane Plenderleith, Sally Rush, Alexander Stoddart, David Walker and David Watkin, as well as an introduction by the late Sir John Summerson.

### THOMSON'S BIRTHDAY: A VISIT TO THE SHERIFF COURT

This year April 9th falls on a Saturday, which is not an ideal day to hold a party. Instead, Roger Guthrie has organised an afternoon visit to the Sheriff Court, the Greek Revival pile by Clark & Bell which Thomson praised in his Haldane Lectures: "all the examples [of Greek architecture] which have hitherto been regarded as models for study or imitation are to be found on the Acropolis of Athens, and may easily be enumerated. Like the Muses, they are nine. Of these seven have been used in Glasgow..." And amongst these Thomson then cited "the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates on the Merchants' House, Hutcheson-street" and "the Erechtheion on... the Municipal and County Buildings..." - both of which form part of what is now called the Sheriff Court. "And, if you will put yourself to the trouble of examining these examples, you will find that, though so few in number, there is considerable variety, and that all are very good."

The Sheriff Court should, of course, have been chosen by the Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland to be the future, putative, Gallery of Scottish Art. Therefore, prior to our visit, there will be an opportunity to visit the offices of the architects Page & Park in the Italian Centre to see the models and drawings of their brilliant schemes to convert this building.

Please meet at 1.30 p.m. on April 9th at the offices of Page Park at 49, Cochrane Street (where liquid refreshments will be served) or at the Wilson Street portico of the Sheriff Court at 2.30 p.m.

### FILM SHOW

In the not too distant future we hope to organise another showing of the 1967 film on Greek Thomson made by the Scottish Educational Film Association. Those who saw the film in November were tantalised and saddened by footage of buildings since destroyed. There were also other intriguing images, such a coloured engraved portrait of a (bearded) Thomson. Where did this come from? Where is it now?

# MOSSMAN'S STUDIO

*Sculptor Alexander Stoddart considers the importance of the discovery of drawings of James Mossman's Studio in Glasgow.*



The recent discovery of a drawing of the North Frederick Street elevation of the great Glasgow sculptor John Mossman's studio, together with some very detailed studies of parts of its decorative scheme, comes as an oasis of almost unbelievable succulence in the Sahara of speculation that has surrounded this lost building's appearance.

It is important on two chief counts. First, that it represents what Thomson's ardent chronicler Thomas Gildard described as unsurpassed "in quality of composition, if not also of detail" amongst the architect's subsequent works. Secondly, the Studio is thought to be the first essay in Thomson's 'Cyclopean' style, dating from 1856, which style was to lend greatly to Thomson's distinction as a Greek Revivalist capable of evoking, within the strict terms of academic practice, the spirit of a

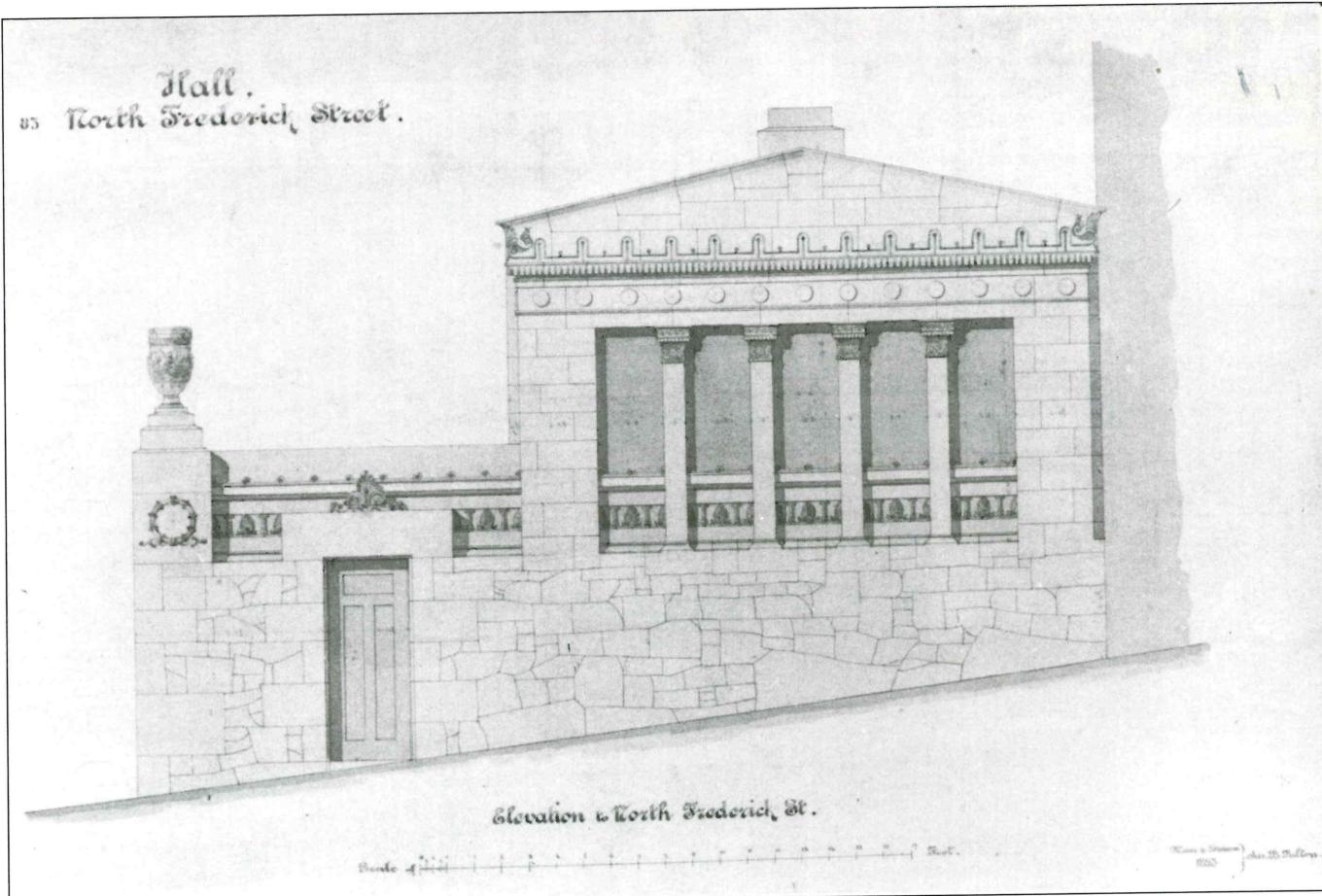
proto-classical antiquity of Mycenae character. In this evocation, emblems of terrific scale (the polygonal plinth-masonry blocks) combine with passages of what Thomson and his contemporaries would have called 'fancy'. The compound effect is cultic, reaching its natural design conclusion in polychromy, in the interior use of which Thomson, of course, excels.

But the interior to Mossman's Studio would be graced with no coloured extravagances. If the existing photograph of Mossman's Studio from the mid-1870s does indeed disclose this facade's verso (and there is some doubt, centred around the matter of roof-span), then we see only the simplest interior fitting: a great moving gantry and a set of rails positioned to run the weighty blocks of free-stone and granite into the heart of the workshop. It seems very likely, from a contemporaneous

*Mossman's Studio, 1877, showing statues for St Andrew's Halls.*  
Photo: Strathclyde Regional Archives

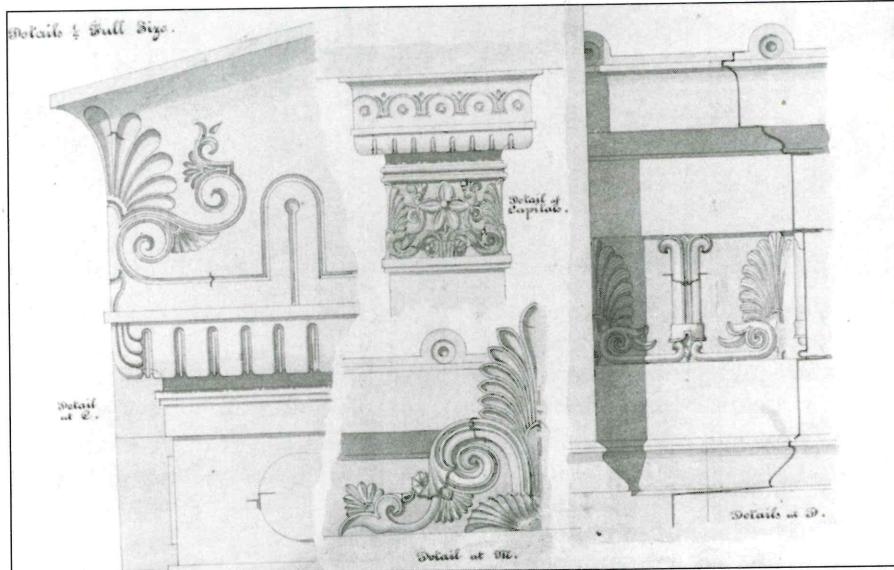
street-plan of the site, that this studio was, as it were, the 'front' to a series of sheds and yard-spaces, of no particular design distinction, used as necessary in the process of Mossman's prolific practice. The sculptor is known to have had premises elsewhere in the city, further along Cathedral Street, for instance, and adjacent to his home in Elmbank Street.

The advantage of the recently discovered drawing is that it renders the building exactly as it appeared in 1893, and is therefore distinct from a design which might be subject to alteration within the course of the execution of the building. Take the horizontal extension south, accommodating the door and closing with the strong upright plinth. We know from this that the urn which termi-



nates the composition certainly existed, and, insofar as it bears figure-work upon it, then it adds significantly to the steadily increasing evidence of collaboration between Mossman and Thomson on the matter of integrating the human figure into the decorative systems of the latter's buildings. The rendition is too small to be able to deduce the subject of the urn's frieze.

The foliate decoration is an interesting contrast between the highly cost-effective incisional manner, and that of the full-relieved 'sunken field' sort. In the pedimental region, all is incised; then the capitals of the four pilaster-columns introduce full relieved modelling. A quick descent to the engagement of the columns finds the next sequence of decoration, which then takes the eye through to the southern section by means of a rhythmically repeated antefix motif, coupled with papyrus. The acroterion above the main door contrasts well with the massive entablature block which it adorns, but the only part which, in my opinion, corrupts the otherwise subtle decorative scheme is the wreath beneath the urn. It seems to distract from the natural 'loud chord' concluding this



remarkable piece of music.

Important for two reasons; but here's a third. As evidence of the political substance of Glasgow in the mid-19th Century, we view this prospect of the city's chief sculptor's workshop facade as a piece of proclaiming rhetoric, announcing the importance of the arts within the conurbation, and particularly those arts which monumentalise. This building has to represent a municipal process which sends images of grandeur and gravity throughout the western lands; consequently, this

building has to connote power. Glasgow's 19th century was graced with artists who had no need of resort to indulgence from authorities. Rather, they were actively pursued by an anxious and keen clientèle. As a result, they could afford to articulate their premises as Mossman here articulated his. The rest of us, in these latter, de-conceptualised days, are reduced to working in *ad hoc* circumstances, with conditions that even the rats disdain. Glasgow: City of Architecture and Design, 1856.

# THE END OF QUEEN'S PARK CHURCH: 25th March 1943

*An extract from the talk by Dominic d'Angelo on Queen's Park Church, given on the fiftieth anniversary of its destruction.*

Long before the outbreak of hostilities, the Luftwaffe had been preparing to wage war from the air on Britain. A major aerial reconnaissance of the country had been carried out to highlight industrial and economic targets, and individual targets in the Clydeside area were photographed and marked. In Glasgow, those targets all lay west of Lancefield Street, slightly west of where the Kingston Bridge crosses the river today.

Before the war, it had always been assumed that the impact of bombing would be immediate and universally devastating, but the impact of the bomber was not as great as feared. The London Blitz, which started in the late summer of 1940, became in essence a feature of the war of attrition which followed the postponement of Operation Sealion—the invasion of Britain. In November 1940, the Luftwaffe turned to other British cities: Coventry, Liverpool, Southampton and Birmingham were all attacked that month.

In Glasgow, raids were sporadic and

relatively minor: the first daylight raid took place on 19th July 1940, causing damage in Scotstoun. The first night raid was on 18th September: a bomb landed in George Square right next to an air raid shelter (which survived the blast). The cruiser HMS Sussex in Yorkhill Basin was less lucky, hit by a 500lb bomb. The bomb went through the upper, main and lower decks, then exploded on the platform deck deep within the ship. Jean Brown was then 17 years old and living in the last close of Kelvinhaugh Street, opposite Queen's Dock:

'The crew were thrown into the Clyde by the bomb and they were brought from the basin up to our street for clothes, as most of them were naked. We were told to turn off the water and gas and go to Kelvingrove Park'.

The reason for evacuating local residents was simple: the Sussex was ready to sail as an escort on the Murmansk run, and her magazines were full. Broken-backed, she lay in the river for days, visible to thou-

sands of travellers on trains running in and out of Central Station. Censorship ensured that no news of the damage reached German ears.

Raids grew more frequent and more damaging, and culminated in the great Spring raids of 1941. On the nights of 13/14 and 14/15 March, 1,083 people were killed and 1,602 seriously injured in Glasgow and Clydebank. In Clydebank, 8 out of 12,000 houses were left undamaged. On 7/8 April 64 people died and 71 injured, and in the last great raids, at the end of the first week of May, 341 died with 312 injured. The Germans then turned their attention to Greenock and Gourock.

Losses of life in city raids, especially of children, were high; they were exacerbated by the return of many evacuees from the countryside to which they had been sent at the beginning of the 'phoney war'. Patrick Donnelly was one who returned to the city from the country:

'At the beginning o' the war, the whole family were evacuated to



# QUEEN'S PARK CHURCH

*Continued from Page 11*

Tighnabruach, and we stayed there for a few month. We couldn't stick the country life kinda thing, we stayed in the Marquis o' Bute's house; it was like a big haunted house and we couldn't really stand it. I think most people actually came home. You've got your home and it doesn't really matter how bad things are, you'll just go back to it and just accept it.'

During the first year of the phoney war, the returnees' decision seemed vindicated: people got used to sirens sounding for false alarms, or nothing more than the odd German reconnaissance plane. Shortly before March 1943, however, many noticed increased activity above Clydebank. A Mr Bain recalled the period:

'There was an apprentices' strike on in the Clyde shipyards and the weather couldn't have been better. It was like a summer's day in March and we played a lot of football in the afternoon. Well, I was in the Royal Artillery at the time, on ack-ack, so we were trained for spottin' planes. On the Tuesday afternoon, I think it was, there was a plane flying pretty high and I said, well, it looked like a JU 88—it definitely to me was a reconnaissance plane going over—but I never thought any more about it. But I've thought plenty of it since, because of what happened on the Thursday night.'

That night, Thomas Howarth and his wife were dining with the William Davidsons, who lived in the former home of Charles and Margaret Mackintosh at 78 Southpark Avenue:

'We left early and, as we paused at the gate to enjoy the pitch-black starlit night, we heard the sinister, unmistakeable throb of a German pathfinder aircraft overhead.'

'We made our way in the blackout to the Garnethill tram terminal and rode home to Shawlands. By the time we arrived the sky over Clydebank was glowing red, punctuated by streams of tracer shells and accompanied by the thud, thud, thud of explosions.'

'We moved our mattresses from the bedroom to the central hallway of our four-storey tenement apartment: there were no air raid shelters available and we lived on the top floor. This arrangement provided but flimsy protection from flying glass and all we had above us was the traditional wooden, slated roof. But for the lack of better protection we slept there during air raids.'

Mrs Bain, too, recalled the night: 'When the raid started my sister and I were over in Blanefield. We were with two boyfriends and one o' them drove a car. It was the sky, the sky was all lit wi' red, just a red glow in the sky. Comin' over Windy Hill you could see the whole o' the Clyde Valley: Clydebank seemed to be all on fire.'

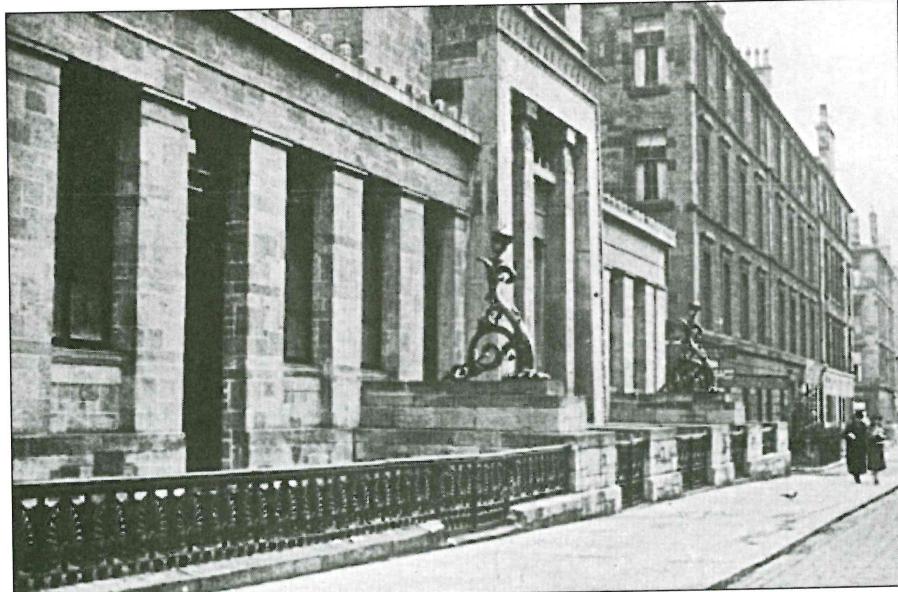
If Clydebank, since the war, has become synonymous with air raid damage, it is not an accurate reflection of the situation. A 'secret' report by the Office of the Regional Commissioner, now held in the Scottish Office archives, reports 'The grievous nature of the damage at Clydebank... has tended to veil the magnitude of the attack on Glasgow.'

Strathclyde Regional Council Archives contain a bomb damage map drawn up in October 1943 by the Glasgow Master of Works and City Engineer. It reveals damage to have been well scattered throughout the city from Tradeston, Garscadden and Yoker (with severe damage) to Dalmarnock, Hutchesontown, Partick, Hyndland and Kelvinside. Many gap sites remain today: the lesser quality infill buildings which, for many of us, tend to be thought of as a result of 1970s demolition of tenements before renovation became the order of the day, were often created not by the Glasgow Corporation, but the German Luftwaffe.

During two nights in March, Glasgow lost 647 dead and 1,680 injured, with 6,835 houses damaged severely, and 20,000 others suffering minor damage. Yarrow's and Blythswood's shipyards at Scotstoun were badly damaged, but, in contrast to Clydebank, damage was widespread throughout the city rather than concentrated in one area. In Maryhill, three tenements were destroyed and 100 people injured. At Yarrow's 80 people died after their shelter sustained a direct hit.

Gourock and Greenock, too, were hit hard, with firemen bussed in from as far as Edinburgh to help. Jack Grant was one of the firemen:

'There were no firemen about—they were all dead beat—and the mains water was off. A pump relay had been arranged from the docks and they were filling huge tanks with water in the streets. There were hundreds of hosepipes in the streets—you could hardly walk between them—and they were unattended, with the nozzles jammed between stones



and the water directed on the fires. In went with a warden, who said "This is Cathcart Street and Cathcart Square. Do the best you can." Then he went off. In the whole area there was only Frankie Sweeney and me. It was like a world of our own.'

A number of strange stories are told of the air raids. Father Sheary was a Clydebank parish priest:

'Mrs Semple had a large family and they were all young. On that night, she had one in either arm and one on either side of her and she was standing in a close. I think it was an aerial torpedo that struck against Jericho Street, but the blast that came from that took a child out of her right arm and took the child at her left side, leaving her with the child in her left arm and a child at her right side. They escaped, she escaped, but she never saw as much as a rip of hair belonging to the other two children.'

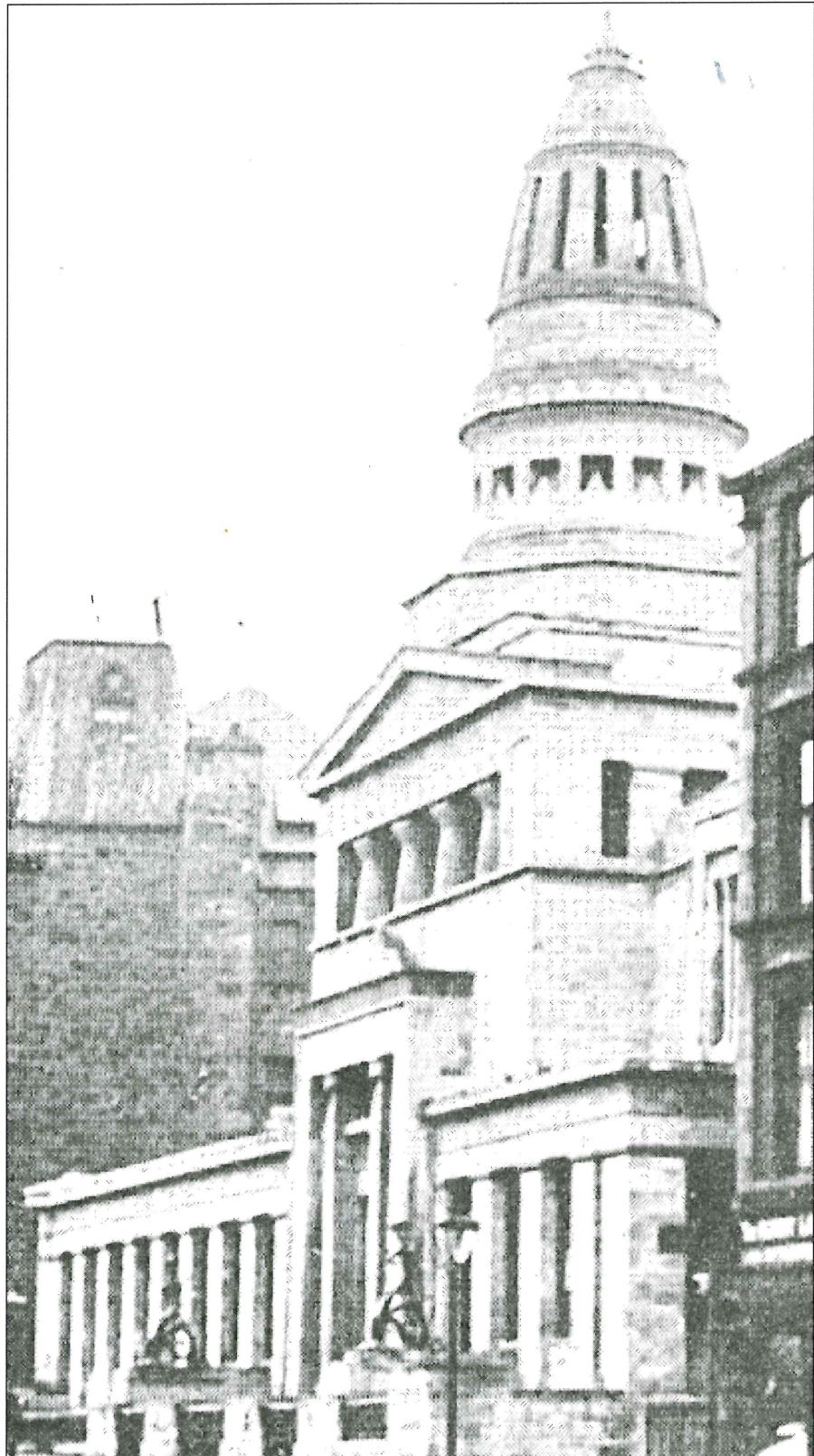
Tenement homes became death traps, with whole families wiped out in one explosion. Shelters saved many, but only Providence could save those near the place of impact of a landmine or bomb. Yet, in the shelters, it was possible to remain unaware of the horror outside:

'That first night in the shelter at Rolls-Royce, it was quite remarkable, because we found out there was quite a number of talented people, girls, who were singing opera stuff, of that quality—it was unbelievable. And of course whenever a bomb went off there was hysterics, you know, the girls screaming and the men saying 'Everything's alright', and then probably encourage the girls to sing again. We had no sort of inclination what was happening upstairs.'

In 1939, Rolls-Royce had taken a greenfield site in Hillington and built a 150-acre factory employing 27,000 people. It was never hit.

The raids on Greenock and Glasgow were the last serious raids on the Clyde area. The operations were expensive in terms of fuel, and there were easier, more accessible targets. And a month later, Hitler launched the Russian offensive.

Nevertheless they continued, but

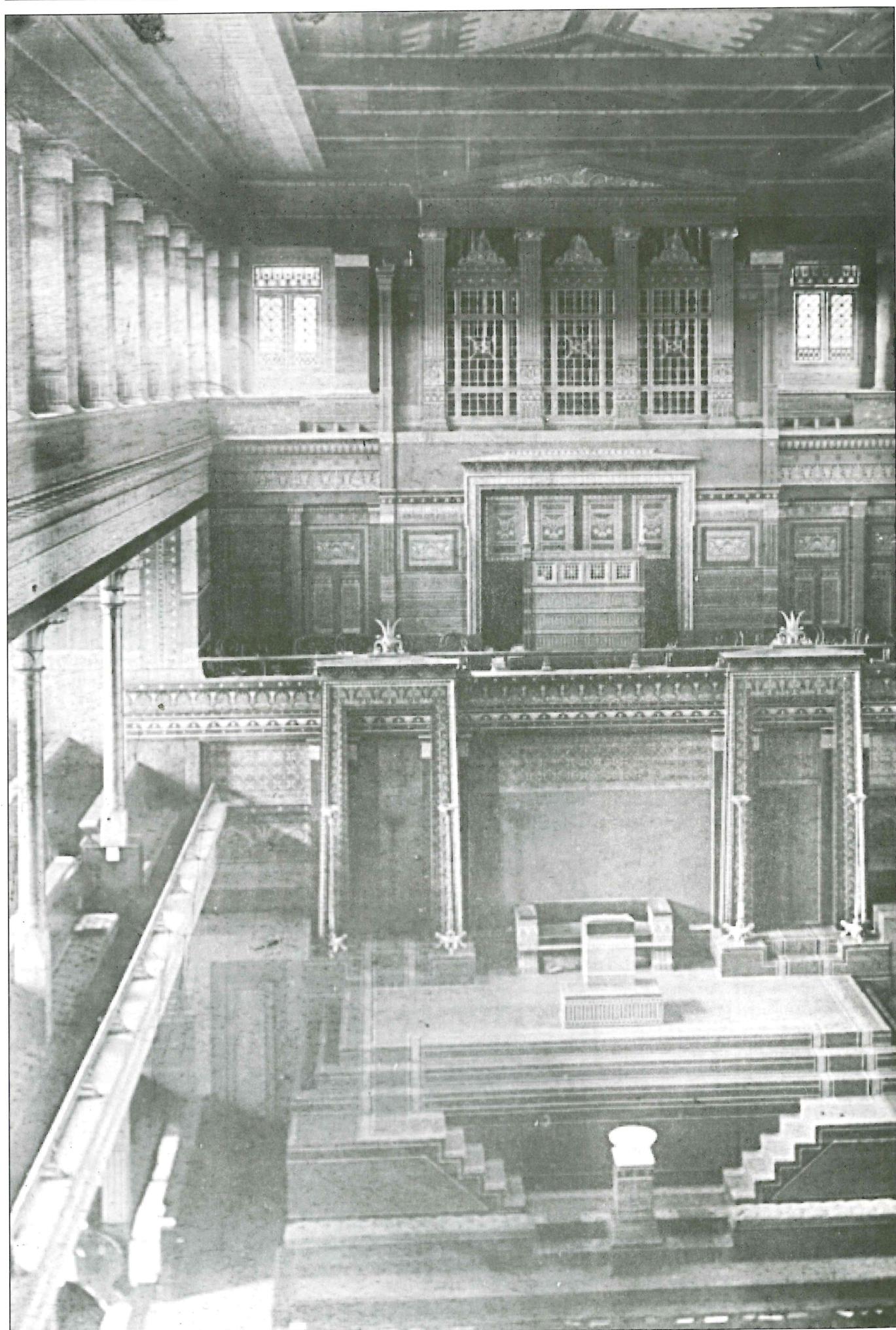


more sporadically. The last raid of the Second World War on Glasgow came on the night of 24/25th March 1943. It would claim six lives, and a church.

That night, Thomas Howarth and his wife, still sleeping in the hallway of their top-floor tenement flat in Shawlands, were awakened by the familiar call of the sirens. They seemed extraordinarily close:

'The frantic roar of engines at full throttle was unforgettable, and as they passed there was an extraordinary clatter as though all our slates had lifted in the suction created by their extremely low passage, and then fell back with a xylophonic cacophony. In retrospect, it may have been the noise of falling shrapnel—but I don't

*Continued on Page 11*



# QUEEN'S PARK CHURCH

Continued from Page 9

think so.'

Twenty-five planes were taking part a final raid on Glasgow. A half-mile further on, the Germans jettisoned their incendiaries.

The *Glasgow Herald* City Edition of Thursday 25th March reported:

'A church recognised as one of the finest architecturally in a town in Central Scotland was completely destroyed by incendiary bombs dropped by one of the few enemy planes which flew over the town in the early hours of yesterday morning.

It was the only building seriously damaged and there were no casualties. Many incendiaries fell in the vicinity of the church, most of them in the streets, and they were extinguished by fire parties, leaving the National Fire Service free to concentrate on extinguishing the outbreak in the church.

One fell through the roof of a near-by school. The damage done was negligible, but the children were not allowed to enter the classrooms...

The only other damage to property was to three houses whose windows are on a gable separated from the church by a lane about 12 feet wide. Damage, however, was slight, and rooms in all three houses are still habitable. The water escaping from a water pipe, which melted as a result of the intense heat from the blazing church probably saved the outbreak from spreading to the other houses in the tenement.

In fact, six people died during the raid: P.C. Charles Collie, collapsed from a heart attack and died on his beat as the bombs fell. Four women and a man, all late middle-aged or elderly, also died, apparently from heart attacks and shock.

The name of the local school whose roof was hit is not known: it is possible that it was Pollok Academy, designed by Baird and Thomson, and now demolished.

Roy Reid worked in a baker's at 66 Albert Road. He came along

Langside Road to the bakery every day. In the raid, ten incendiaries fell on the bakery, which went up in flames. The foreman, a Mr Caruth, aged about 65, used to lock the doors of the bakery when the 10 or 12 night shift men started work, to stop draughts spoiling the yeast. That night, he was forced to unlock them again. When Roy Reid came out, he saw Queen's Park Church in full blaze. According to Frank Worsdall, the resulting inferno lit up the whole south side of the city. The elderly Mr Caruth, meanwhile, had headed for his local church, which was also on fire: using a long pole to dislodge incendiaries from the roof, the bulk of the building was saved.

As the fire died down, Roy Reid tried to pass by the burnt out church, but the road was sealed off by police.

On 26th March, *The Times* issued a report under the headline 'Six Night Raiders Destroyed. Damage in the North':

'Of about 25 enemy raiders which made raids over the Lowlands and the North of England on Wednesday night, six are known to have been destroyed. One of the raiders, a Dornier 217 twin-engined bomber, was shot down into the sea off a north-east coast town by a Beaufighter pilot. The raiders were met by a heavy barrage from the ground defences, some of which were manned by Home Guards.

It was the first air raid on central and west Scotland for a long time. Little material damage was done and not a single person was injured, although the deaths of six elderly persons during or after the raid were attributed to shock. In one town a shower of incendiaries fell on a beautiful old church, which was completely gutted, but tenements near by escaped serious damage. Firefighting parties, often composed mainly of women, did excellent service in dealing promptly with incendiaries and preventing outbreaks of fire.'

The following day, the *Daily Record* saluted Home Guard anti-aircraft teams, which were used for the first

time on the night of the raid:

'Scotland's AA Defenders deserve a pat on the back. It is now confirmed that eight of the 25 German planes which raided parts of Scotland and North-East England on Thursday morning were destroyed.

'While this evidence of alert and skilful defence is very gratifying, there are some aspects of public reaction to air raids which are not so satisfactory. According to Mr W Quin, Deputy Regional Controller, this week's raid found domestic garden shelters, so long unused for their legitimate purpose, cluttered up with furniture, garden implements, etc. Another official reveals that Anderson shelters have even been turned into hen-houses.

'Casualties were caused by people disobeying the order to take cover and being injured by the shrapnel from their own guns.'

On Monday, 29th March, the *Glasgow Herald* reported on the weekend's events:

'While hundreds of sightseers yesterday afternoon thronged round the church in the Central Scottish town which was destroyed by an air raid early last Thursday morning [Roy Reid couldn't get near for the crowds], the congregation gathered in a near-by church [Queen's Park High Church] to plan their immediate future.

It was decided unanimously to worship in present in the disused Titwood church, which has been rendered vacant as the result of a union.

Appealing for the congregation to continue its support though it has lost its church, the session clerk said, 'I am quite certain that the spirit which has kept our church going for 75 years was not burned out on Thursday morning'.

The *Herald* photograph of the damaged church, published the morning after the raid, reveals the extent of the damage. The fact that the destruction should have been so extensive appears to have been largely the result of the volume of painted

# QUEEN'S PARK CHURCH

Continued from Page 7

and varnished wood used in the construction of the church, though an extended correspondence in the *Herald* seemed to point fingers elsewhere, according to a letter entitled 'Fire-Watching of Churches', published on 30th March:

'Sir: I have recently been informed that the fire-watching of churches is not compulsory according to the Defence Regulations. If this is not so, it is surely a grave oversight on the part of the Government. There have been recently quite a number of churches destroyed which would have been saved by prompt action, but, owing to lack of fire-watchers, were allowed to blaze away, making a splendid target for the heavy bombers which follow up the first wave of planes. Thus private houses and other buildings in the vicinity of a church are having an extra risk imposed on them by the neglect and carelessness of our spiritual brethren. I am, etc,

Adjacent to a Church

The following day, the *Herald* responded in 'An Editorial Diary': 'In reply to an enquiry, a Civil Defence Department official said that as churches do not come under the Business Premises Order, there was no compulsion upon congregations to provide fire-watchers. The local authority, however, has power to place State fireguards in empty buildings, churches and similar places.'

This preoccupation with the question of fire-watching was no doubt prompted by the recent destruction of a church in a Central Scottish town during an air raid, but that fire was not due to the absence of watchers. A local team had made its headquarters in the church, but when the incendiaries fell, the height of the roof prevented the watchers from dealing with them effectively.'

With the collapse of the belfry, and the damage to the walls, demolition was inevitable. In Gomme and Walker's terms, Queen's Park Church was 'the only serious wartime casualty that Glasgow suffered, and

one of the unhappiest architectural losses in Britain'.

But would the church have survived? The period following the Second World War was a difficult one for churches and their congregations, with severe restrictions upon buildings and astronomical rises in building costs. Even in the inter-war period, the standard Church of Scotland calculation was that a church seating around 500, a hall for around 300, and all the ancillaries thereof, should be provided for a sum of £10,000 (Queen's Park had cost just under £7,000).

After 1945, the Ministry of Works allowed certain sums to be divided out between the churches of all denominations; the Church of Scotland could recommend, with the Ministry's permission, licences to build up to the sums agreed upon. (the average given for this purpose per person per year in certain districts amounted to the price of a packet of cigarettes). With the movement of populations yet again, churches were faced with the same problem they had faced a century before: populations springing up in areas where no previous church buildings existed. But lack of funds meant churches with attached halls could no longer be considered: the maximum allowed was a hall-church, a dual-purpose building. In some ways this was a return to earlier days when the church was the only public building in the community and liable to be used for purposes other than the strictly religious (as late as 1863, the General Assembly had to protest against churches being used for political meetings and social entertainments).

Small wonder, therefore, that when it came time to consider replacing Queen's Park, the government offered in replacement a plain brick hall-church. The congregation, not surprisingly declined. Three years later, on 3rd March 1946, Queen's Park Church terminated, uniting with Camphill as Camphill Queen's Park, and worshipping in William Leiper's 1878 building in Balvicar Drive.

Even had the church survived the war undamaged, it might not have

remained intact: the 1929 union between the Established Church and the United Free Church (the latter itself an amalgam of most of the Disruption and Secession elements) led to a drastic reduction in the number of churches as congregations merged and buildings closed. In rural areas, old parish kirks were often abandoned in favour of 19th century Free Church buildings: they might have a more recent installation of electric light or central heating, or simply more comfortable pews.

Population shifts and the decline in church-going have had their effect on inner-city and suburban churches alike: Renfield St Stephens' Church in Bath Street, Glasgow today comprises thirteen former parishes: Blythswood, Buccleuch, Cowcaddens Grant Street, Lyon Street, Milton, Port Dundas, Renfield Street, St George's Road, St Matthew's, St Stephen's, St Stephen's West, and Shamrock Street.

In 1840, Glasgow Presbytery comprised 79 parishes. Between 1840 and 1880, in Glasgow Presbytery alone, 222 new parishes and church buildings were constructed. More followed after 1880. Yet by 1984, excluding seven congregations which now comprised East Kilbride, there were only 41 parishes in Glasgow city, and 35 parishes in the surrounding Presbytery.

Even had it survived the war, would Queen's Park Church have survived the amalgamations, or would it have become yet another redundant church? Fifty years after its destruction, we will never know.

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